

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as currently amended and in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3 and 5-7 are currently active in this case. Claim 1 has been amended, and claims 4 and 8 have been cancelled by the current amendment. No new matter has been added.

In the outstanding office action, the abstract was objected to; and claims 1-3 and 5-7 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. patent No. 6,861,838 to Kawase in view of U.S. patent No. 4,894,615 to Mermelstein.

In response to the objection to the abstract, the abstract has been rewritten to conform with the format identified in the office action. Consequently, no further objection to the abstract is anticipated.

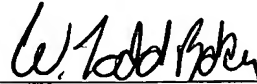
Filed herewith is (a) an English language translation of Applicants' Japanese priority application number 2002-96710 filed on March 29, 2002 and (b) a statement that the translation is accurate (i.e., true). Consequently, under 37 CFR 1.55(a)(3)(ii), the Kawase patent (filed September 13, 2002) is removed as 35 USC 102(e) prior art. Mermelstein alone fails to teach or suggest the subject matter of the present invention. Thus, the 35 USC 103(a) rejection should be withdrawn.

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Reply to Office Action of October 4, 2006

In view of the foregoing, no further issues are believed to remain. An early and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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